

PARENTING AUTISM & ASPERGERS NEWSLETTER
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Hi [[name]],

Welcome to the fourth edition of

"The Parenting Autism & Aspergers Newsletter"

Inside this edition you will find:

1. Hot Topic of Discussion – Are 1 in 150 kids in the USA really autistic?
2. In the News – Changing spark plugs at age 4!
3. Parenting Tips - School Problems.
4. Famous Autistic Person - Matt Savage.
5. Helping your Asperger's Child at school.
6. Transporters DVD - Update Part 2.

Best Wishes

John Hillage

Are 1 in 150 US kids autistic?

Earlier in the month a number of major newspapers like USA Today, The New York Times, The Washington Post and a host of other newspaper and TV stations broadcast a new study that appeared to indicate that 1 in every 150 children in the USA is autistic.

This came from a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (a US Government Organisation).

At about 0.66% of the entire US population of children being on the autistic spectrum this figure looked pretty high to me at first glance.

Even taking into account the increasing numbers of autistic children being diagnosed each year.

On closer inspection though things aren't exactly as they

appear.....

It seems that partly through unclear announcements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the press' tendency to jump into situation without looking deeply enough - the numbers don't add up.

The study was carried out in 14 states in the USA and the numbers found in these states were then all multiplied up to the figure of 560,000 children across the USA (or 1 in 150) with autism.

This is what scientists call "extrapolation" where you take a certain small specific study and generalise its results to a much bigger population.

And as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention do actually point out, if you read their information carefully, this extrapolation is largely unscientific and so the figure of 1 in 150 is not accurate.

But for me the positive upshot of this was that it got autism back out there in the media around the world - which can only help to spread awareness and greater understanding of autism.

Which has to be a good thing.

Unfortunately the story was bidding for attention at the time of Anne Nicole Smith's death, which means that it may have had even more intense media attention otherwise.

I also believe that recently Toni Braxton (the singer) was on ABC News talking about her autistic child - which again can only help to educate the public at large.

Positive images in the media are so important to help foster a more educated and tolerant society to the needs of autistic children and adults everywhere.

To read ABC News' take on this story go to:

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/story?id=2863431&page=2>

Changing spark plugs at age 4!

This news story comes from Long View, Washington State, USA.

It's the heart warming story of a young man with Aspergers

Syndrome (Jonathan) who has gone on to achieve great things in his community.

The title for this article comes from a quote in the local "Daily News" that states:

"When Jonathan Galbraith was 4 years old, he could change spark plugs.

By the time he was 9, he could wire light fixtures and plumb sinks and toilets.

But he couldn't button his shirt."

I wonder if this rings any bells with people?

Now I sometimes get concerned about these "autism equals genius" stories such as the film "Rain Man" as for the majority of families this is simply not the case.

And can cause unnecessary confusion and inaccurate views of autism in society.

However this article had some depth and went on to outline Jonathan's life fully.

Born in Canada Jonathan had a lot of medical problems as well as some "classically" autistic/Aspergers behaviors such as hand flapping, walking on tiptoes, obsessive-compulsive tendencies for lining objects up, in his early years.

A great demonstration of the very literal high functioning thinking of Aspergers children was demonstrated in another quote in the article that read:

"When the boy was 4, April took him to the local library for story and movie time.

The film that day was about Jack Frost.

It showed a child scraping frost off a window so that he could see outside.

When the librarian asked what the child was scraping off the window, Jonathan shouted, "Condensation that has frozen!"

Jonathan moved to Missouri and years of social problems and school problems ensued until eventually at aged 11 years he was given a diagnosis of Aspergers Syndrome.

IN 1995 Jonathan got his first computer which was a major "aha" moment for him.

He won a competition in a computer magazine and since he moved to Washington State in 2000 he has mended literally hundreds of computers.

After home schooling for some time he went back to High School in 2002 but again found the curriculum and whole experience not to be in line with his needs.

I.T. saved the day again as he helped the vice-principal with her computer one day and before long was helping the teachers and became the "unofficial" I.T. worker for the whole school.

The school were flexible and helped him to use this work to gain credits towards graduation.

Since then Jonathan has gone on to help out mending videos, computers and all kinds of electrical equipment for various voluntary projects.

And his parents are currently building a shop for him at the back of their house so that he can go into business repairing and selling electrical products himself.

This young man definitely has a positive presence and fulfilling life in his local community and has overcome a lot of big obstacles along the way.

I think that Jonathan, his parents, the school and medical staff who helped him along the way all deserve huge credit for the inspirational story that they have helped to create.

To read the full version of this story (I only took out some of the main points) go to:

http://www.tdn.com/articles/2006/12/31/this_day/news04.txt

Parenting Tip - School problems

We recently received a question from a reader of the newsletter about her 8 year old grandson with Aspergers:

"How to help with the situation of school for a child who is withdrawn (not disruptive) therefore the teachers

don't have a problem"

We replied:

A child with Aspergers who is withdrawn and does not join in with the rest of the class is just as much of a concern than one who is 'acting out'.

The trouble is schools and teachers will often ignore this as they associate problems with poor behavior.

There are several reasons why this may be happening.

He may be bored and just 'zoned out'.

If this is the case his interest and motivation to engage will need to be captured.

Another reason for withdrawal is chronic low self esteem and lack of confidence.

Many Aspergers kids know they are 'different' and don't want to stand out from the crowd.

They are often afraid of being laughed at or teased.

It is important to get to the root of the problem.

Gently encourage him to talk about what changes he would like to make to the classroom environment to make it a better place.

He may well tell you what some of the problems are.

Arrange an appointment to see his teacher and discuss your concerns.

It may be that his teacher hasn't even noticed that there is a problem!

It's really important to keep the channels of communication between home and school open so that you are both working together and are seeing the same picture.

Matt Savage - 15 year old Jazz Piano genius

Matt is a 15 year old who is taking the jazz world by storm with his jazz group The Matt Savage Trio.

Now Matt was diagnosed at 3 years of age with autism and is described to as being an "autistic savant".

This is one of those rare occasions when an autistic child has a very specialised and highly expert talent (as I mentioned earlier with the "Rain Man" example).

Another person described as being an "autistic savant" is the famous writer and autism spokesperson Dr. Temple Grandin.

Now statistically the majority of autistic kids are never going to have this particular type of ability - and the problem is that society/media can take these extreme situations and present it for the general public like it's the norm for autistic children.

Which is unfair and untrue.

None the less I think that Matt's life is fascinating.

According to his website he went through something called the "DAN protocol" which uses dietary and vitamin approaches to help with autism (I don't know how effective this approach is and whether it's been studied to determine this).

He also had intensive speech therapy, language therapy and audio integration therapy.

By aged 7 1/2 Matt had recorded his first album.

He has since gone on to ever greater musical success and recorded with such jazz greats as Dave Brubeck, Chick Corea, Chaka Khan and Bobby Watson.

He also appeared on many TV shows such as Jay Leno, The Today Show, Montel Williams and Late Nite with Conan O'Brien.

This illustrates a child at the very extreme end of autism and he is clearly doing great things.

But I do want to stress that this article is just to show another famous person in the world today on the autistic spectrum.

Not to necessarily advocate a specific type of therapy giving specific results.

Although as always my advice is to get informed and look into any kinds of therapeutic approaches which may be of

benefit to you and your autistic child.

To learn more about Matt or listen to his music go to:

<http://savagerecords.com/>

Helping your child at school

Now I know that for many Aspergers children school can be very difficult and exams, tests and things like that can be a nightmare.

So I was interested to stumble across a website recently that helps children and adults to learn the skills that they need to greatly improve their memory.

This can help them to do better at tests, exams and in all kinds of other situations at home and school that can come up.

The information is put together by a guy called Jim Sarris who is a high school teacher with over 15 years experience and the author of 3 books on memory.

If you get the chance I would go over and take a look at his website:

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/SYS/?m=57180&c=1>

He has several great resources there and offers a free special report called "Why You Have Trouble Remembering" and a free mini-course called "7 Tips to Instantly Boost Your Memory Power."

So if nothing else you can try them out for free and see if you think they are any use to your Aspergers child.

Transporters DVD update part 2

Last month I sent you information about a free educational DVD available in the UK for children with ASD called "The Transporters".

Some of you non-Uk residents asked if I could help in getting a copy to you.

I have sent off and requested a copy for myself and the website said that it would be up to 8 weeks delivery time.

I suspect that with how popular they are it may even be longer than this.

So I haven't forgotten you guys who asked for copies and once I get my copy I will work out ways of getting copies of the DVD overseas to you.

Watch this space.....

Well that's all for this edition and I hope you enjoyed it.

We are currently looking at making a new information resource for parents of Aspergers children.

We want it to be driven by you guys (our readers) so at some point in the next month (when I can master the technology!) I will be sending out a quick survey to you all to see what would be the most useful subject for us to concentrate on.

As usual I will be giving away a new report that I am compiling on Aspergers to anyone who takes the time to complete the survey.

So watch out for that in your in-box.

And the next edition of the newsletter should be due in mid-March.

And as ever.....please send in any inspirational stories that you know of, any questions that you would like our team of experts to answer, any topics that you wish to be discussed and news stories that you want to share.

We will publish as many as we can.

Until next month.....

Best Wishes

John Hillage

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P.S. Please feel free to forward this newsletter to your friends.

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The write of the material present in the “The Parenting Autism & Aspergers Newsletter” believes that a multi-disciplinary approach to parenting aspergers children is of extreme importance. This means combining the approaches of a wide variety of disciplines involved with aspergers children and their parents such as social workers, nurses, teachers, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, speech therapists. Also it involves using the knowledge and information of parents them selves. The author recognizes that within scientific, educational, social and medical fields there are widely divergent viewpoints and opinions. This material is written for the express purpose of sharing educational information gathered from the experiences of the author and other people in the areas mentioned above. None of the information contained in this email is intended to diagnose, prevent, treat, or cure aspergers, nor is it intended to prescribe any of the techniques, materials or concepts presented as a form of treatment for aspergers. Before beginning any practice relating to aspergers it is highly recommended that you first obtain the consent and advice of a qualified health, education or social care professional. Should you choose to make use of the information contained herein without first consulting a health, education or social care professional, you are prescribing for yourself, which is your inalienable right. However, the author assumes no responsibility for the choices you make after your review of the information contained herein and your consultation with a qualified health, education or social care professional. None of the statements in this article or in the book have been evaluated by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA), or the American Medical Association (AMA). This material is not warranted for any particular or general purpose whatsoever. Viewers of this material assume any and all risks for any use of this material. This material may not be reproduced in any way.

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